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Some uses of the mass media for educating the adolescent are discussed, and the fact that teachers have generally neglected using mass media devices is emphasized. Multisensory stimuli are seen to enhance the excitement and drama of the written page and to be essential to a concept of literacy broad enough to encompass all aspects of critical and creative communication. Two projects involving the use of motion pictures and tape recordings to complement poetry are discussed. The first project planned a film and sound track for chosen poems. The second project used haiku written by the students because this poetry lent itself well to the multimedia approach. Some examples of haiku written by teachers and students are included. (RT)

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THE LITERATE ADOLESCENT IN AN AGE OF MASS MEDIA[1]

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A Re-definition of Literacy

Since the "literate" man has traditionally been defined in terms of print, reading education has attempted to give the child, and subsequently the adolescent, some competence in handling written verbal symbols both critically and imaginatively. Ideally, teachers attempted to strike a balance between the emotional reserve and needed for factual prose, and the emotional release prompted by fiction. If the learner is an enthusiastic and creative reader of quality literature, he is not literate if he is unable to read the daily newspaper critically. The youngster who critically reads the newspaper but is incapable of observing the world around him and responding creatively to good literature is not literate either. Unfortunately, large numbers of adolescents don't read either newspapers or quality literature. They are too busy actively responding to the stimulations of the mass media. Such present media developments as the motion picture, television, filmstrips, 35mm slides, and electronic devices for sound and light provide the adolescent with dimensions of experience in sight, sound, and movement which we have only just begun to appreciate. Future media developments will provide dimensions of experience which we cannot begin to anticipate.

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The traditional definition of "literacy" is thus de too narrow to serve the needs of today. It is important to speak and teach in terms of oral, aural, and pictorial literacy. The mass media demand it.

The Challenge of the Mass Media

Teaching students how to handle the mass media critically and creatively is a challenge few teachers have so far accepted. Since the electronic world of the media bombards us with an assortment of sensory stimuli, we no longer live in a world where adequate response to only one or two kinds of stimuli can be assumed to be sufficient for intelligent functioning. As McLuhan has put it in Understanding Media:

> Just as we now try to control atom-bomb fallout, so we will one day try to control media fallout. Education will become recognized as civil defense against media fallout. The only medium for which our education offers some civil defense is the print medium. The educational establishment, founded on print, does not yet admit to any other responsibilities.

Public education must reflect on the accusation that it is still rooted in a pre-media print era. That teachers are probably sick and tired of being told this does not make it any less true. Teaching people to read is not enough any more. Telling them how language works without asking them to undertake a disciplined investigation of different types of media is insufficient, and language learning without such investigation is probably irrelevant.

The teaching of English at all levels of public instruction is having a hard time catching up with the electronic era. With some scattered and sometimes notable exceptions, neither the curriculum nor the methodology of English has been able to shake clear of the traditional dependency on the written page. If it were simply a question of English education being slow to adapt to the spread of television, things would not be so serious. But

English is not only oriented to a pre-television age, it is in a pre-motion picture, pre-radio era. Teachers have generally not only neglected the mass media, they have failed to exploit or even use at all some of the most commonly available electronic equipment in teaching language and literature. But at this point, some concrete suggestions for action are called for.

Approaching Literature Visually

If the study of literature, for example, is to produce a "literate" man and thereby fulfill its principal function of educating the imagination, it is important that literary experiences stimulate the student's imagination as strongly and as frequently as possible. For a variety of reasons, much of the literature that is taught from textbooks fails to achieve such stimulation. Printed linguistic appeals to the senses are generally undramatic and uninteresting compared to the multi-sensory stimuli of the mass media. It is no wonder that a television program or a motion picture can easily woo the pupil from the printed page. Is it possible, then, for teachers to lift a piece of poetry or prose off the printed page so that it will attack the imagination of young people conditioned by the mass media? Is it possible, for instance, to excite and stimulate both learners and teachers who have come through traditional educational programs to read and write poetry with heightened powers of observation and appreciation?

Two current projects at the University of Calgary provide some answers to these queztions. One project involves the use of poetry as raw material for the production of motion pictures. The teacher begins by asking his class about a selected poem: If we were going to shoot a motion picture about this poem, where would we begin? What is the first thing we would see? Would we try to depict the first line literally, or would we lead up to it by shooting

more generally for atmosphere? Would we need close-ups? Would we need human figures? Why? Where?

As the "raw script" of the poem is gradually structured in terms of the visual, the collective imagination of the class is sharpened. Perhaps for the first time the students are forced to think hard about the visual and dramatic details of literature. In doing so, they are probably "studying" a poem in greater depth than ever before. This approach, of course, is also a stimulating way to look at a scene from a short story, play, or novel.

A further sensory dimension is added when an accompanying tape-recorded sound track is planned. What background music or sound effects should we use? When do we read the words and when do we keep silent? How do we use sound to change mood and tempo?

At Calgary, we have put together samples of the kinds of short 8mm color films and accompanying sound tracks suggested above. We have used inexpensive cameras and avoided the use of sophisticated equipment. We have then said to pre-service and in-service teachers: If we can do this with simple equipment and without previous experience, so can you. We have found that they not only can, they do. Teachers and pupils who have never held a camera in their hands have been making short films and sound tracks to illustrate poems which they have selected themselves. The teachers report that looking at literature as the raw material for class-produced motion pictures has been an imaginatively dynamic experience for them as well as for the young people in their classes.

Films and Haiku

In a related project, an attempt was made to encourage motion picture production with poetry which pre-service teachers wrote themselves. We

hoped that this technique might stimulate the imaginations and heighten the powers of observation of pre-service teachers so that they might do the same with their pupils.

A specific type of poetry, haiku, was selected for this project, since it was felt that this form would lend itself well to a multi-media approach. Articles in professional journals attest to the value of haiku as a way of motivating the writing and oral interpretation of poetry at a wide variety of instructional levels.

The haiku form developed in seventeenth century Japan. It consists of a unit of three lines containing seventeen syllables: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five in the third. Traditional Japanese haiku usually contained a word to suggest the season of the year, and thus is seasonal as well as being sensual--involving imagery and mood. Modern haiku is more concerned with everyday occurrences which evoke personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Haiku provides an opportunity for the writer of any age or ability level to draw on his own personal background to arouse a response in the reader through a disciplined yet simple verse form.

In this project, pre-service teachers were introduced to haiku poetry, wrote their own haikus, and read them to their fellow students. Samples of the 8mm. color films produced as part of the project described earlier were then shown to them, as well as film clips made by the authors, to illustrate haikus which they had written or which they felt might serve as motivational material for the writing of haikus. The students were then told that the motion picture camera belonging to the Department of Curriculum and Instruction was available to them to make a film clip to illustrate a haiku which they might like to write. They were taught to use the camera (which is very simple to operate), how to pan, zoom, fade, etc. They were then free to

take the camera anywhere they chose. Film and developing services were provided by the Department. When all the haikus were written and all of the film clips completed, a session was devoted to showing the films, reading the haikus, and critiquing both the choice of the "raw material" in terms of the content of the haikus and the filming techniques.

The students filmed a wide variety of scenes and situations. Much of the camera work was, as expected, amateurish, but that in no way diminished their enthusiasm for the method. One boy focussed on a pile of burning leaves, then panned slowly up the bare tree to accompany this haiku:

Once those leaves had life
And gave life to that gaunt form
Their time is past now.

Another student panned the interior of the library:

Captives, golden caged
Scratch dry print for meagre crumbs
Outside, free, birds jeer.

Zooming in slowly on a sewer grating (manhole cover) produced a striking medallion-like effect, and these whimsical reactions:

You could have been square.
Where are your four perfect sides?
Put up with your fate.

A round mind is good
Far better than a square mind.
You're ahead of me.

Finally, this charming haiku from a student who set a swing in motion in a deserted November playground, then turned on the camera:

You, Cold Winter Wind,
Chased all the laughter away
Now I swing forlorn.

Student reaction to this technique was extremely positive. Most students wished to use the technique in their student teaching, and, as a result, a unit was planned which was taught by a number of pre-service teachers

at both the elementary and secondary grade levels. In addition, the film clips shot by the authors were shown to pupils at these various instructional levels, and haikus were written to illustrate them, thus reversing the technique. Among the haikus were these, written by "literate adolescents" at the secondary level:

Oh what a weekend!
With all the dancing and tears
It should have been fun.

Curly hair is out
And skirts are getting longer
This is called progress?

Sit there, calendar
You truly know how to live
Each day in itself.

One student produced this striking paradox:

He is different
In many ways, except
He is a foreigner.

Future projects involve producing 8mm. films and 35mm. color slides to illustrate other types of poetry written by pupils, including limericks, ballads, and cinquains. Prose selections, both pupil-written and textual, will also serve as "raw script" for other multi-media projects.

The literate adolescent is turned on and tuned in--on all sensory channels. The mass media is today, and tomorrow, and the future. Not only are the mass media and electronic equipment useful, they are absolutely essential to a concept of literacy which is sufficiently broad to encompass all aspects of critical and creative communication.